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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that traditional values regarding the family are learned early in life and tend to change slowly, if at all. Therefore, it is probable that values and preferences expressed in mate selection would vary little from one generation to the next. A replication of a study first conducted in 1939 which concentrated on male attitudes and values in mate selection was updated using 737 single college males from 29 universities located in 22 states and 6 different geographical regions. Each student completed a questionnaire in which he rated 18 personal characteristics considered to be desirable in a prospective mate. Mean ratings were computed for each characteristic and rank ordered for comparison with previous studies. The hypothesis that present-day males' preferences in mate selection are significantly different from previous generations was not fully supported by the results. For the first time, the characteristics of mutual attraction became the most important consideration. The traits labeled "desire for home and children" and "good cook and housekeepers" declined more in importance than any of the other traits. While regional differences were significant, there were few differences between ethnic groups and no significant differences between divorced males and males who had never been married. (Author)

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CAMPUS VALUES IN MATE SELECTION:

A REPLICATION AND EXPANSION

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INTRODUCTION

The choice of a mate is one of the most important decisions an individual is called upon to make in our society. The emphasis upon happiness in marriage is so great that this choice is seen as overshadowing most others. The individual spends a large amount of his adolescence in courting behavior and social meetings of many possible spouses (Truxal and Merrill, 1953). Through the socialization process persons develop ideas of the characteristics and values most desired in a mate.

It has been generally accepted that the family is the major agency for the process of socialization. Research indicates that traditional values regarding the family are learned early in life and tend to change slowly, if at all. Parental guidance plays a major role in the formation of a child's value system which later in life serves as a basis for all decision making including the process of mate selection (Hudson and Hanze, 1969). Since traditional values change slowly, it is to be expected that values and preferences expressed in mate selection would vary little from one generation to the next. Research conducted by Dr. Reuben Hill in 1939 and Dr. Robert McGinnis in 1956 indicates that this is the case. Their study showed that preferences in mate selection changed very little from the 1939 study to the 1956 replication. The purpose of the present study is to replicate, modify, and expand Hill's original work to determine if the current generation's

preferences in mate selection differ significantly from those of previous generations.

Methods and Procedures

In an effort to be more thorough than Dr. Hill's original investigation, certain revisions and modifications were included in the present study. These revisions involved limiting the scope of the study to an investigation of only those attributes desired in a mate and excluding the areas concerned with age preferences and number of children desired. Females were excluded from the present sample thereby limiting the investigation further to male preferences and attitudes only.

To broaden the base of the study and to achieve a more representative sample, questionnaires were sent to at least two universities in each of the fifty states. Fifty copies of the "Campus Values" questionnaire together with a cover letter explaining the nature of the study and a postage-paid return envelope were mailed to professors at each university in the sample. In order to assure the highest return rate possible for a nationwide sampling, members of the Middle Tennessee State University faculty were asked to contact friends and colleagues at various universities across the nation and personally ask for their participation in administering the surveys. There was a total sample of eighty-eight universities in forty-three states contacted in this manner. In the remaining seven states where there were no personal contacts with local professors, the fifty questionnaires and cover letters were sent to the chairman of the psychology department at the state university in an effort to enlist their cooperation. Returned

questionnaires yielded a sample twenty-two states, representing a total of twenty-nine universities responding with a subject population of 737. Replies were received from every geographical region in the Continental United States. This regional division is also a modification and expansion of the Hudson and Henze (1969) study in which the University of Nebraska, Arizona State University, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and the University of Alberta in Canada were used as representative schools of various regions. Regional division of this study included the southeast, northeast, southwest, midwest, northwest, and far west.

Description of the Subjects

The subjects for this study were 737 single college males from twenty-nine universities located in 22 states in six different georgraphical regions of the country. The sample includes 714 undergraduates and 23 graduate students ranging in age from 17 to 34 years. The questionnaire was administered during the 1977-78 school year. The subjects were instructed not to sign their name, thereby guaranteeing anonymity.

Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire included the usual background items of age, ethnic background, and university classification. Also included were items concerning sibling position, fraternity membership, sexual experience, and political inclination (but not party affiliation). A question as to whether the subject is divorced,

widowed, or has never been married was also included. The evaluative section was taken from the original questionnaire prepared by Reuben Hill and Harold T. Christensen in 1939. It is a list of 18 personal characteristics considered to be desirable in a mate. The 18 traits were to be evaluated according to their degree of importance in choosing a marital partner (Hill, 1945).

The subjects were asked to assign a numerical weight of "six" to those characteristics considered to be most important, a "five" to those items considered to be above average importance, a "four" to indicate average importance, a "three" for just below average, a "two" for the least important items, and a "one" for those items considered totally unimportant or irrelevant. A Copy of the questionnaire is included in this paper.

Design of the Experiment

Mean ratings were computed for each of the 18 characteristics. The characteristics were then ranked ordered for the purpose of comparison with the earlier studies. Also, an analysis of variance between each of the 18 traits and each of the independent variables (ethnic background, frathernity affiliation, sibling position, etc.) was computed to determine where the significant differences occurred and at what percentage level those differences were significant. Additionally, when the analysis of variance indicated a significant difference between groups on an given variable, the Newman-Kuels method was used to investigate the nature of that difference. This procedure was necessary only when there were more than two levels within the group.

Results and Discussion

Results

The data indicates that while there are general similarities between the 1978 study and the earlier studies, there are also important differences. Table 1 gives the rank order of the 18 personality characteristics and their means for the 1978 study. Table 2 gives the rank order of the 18 characteristics for each of the previous studies on mate selection in addition to this one. Since the 1939 study, the top four characteristics and the bottom four have remained the same, though varying in rank. This holds true for the 1978 study also. For the first time, however, dependable character did not rank as the most important characteristic. Instead, mutual attraction moved up to the number one position. The table shows that it was a gradual move, beginning in fourth place in 1939, to third in 1956 and 1963, second in 1967, and finally first in 1978. Emotional stability has declined in rank over the years, moving from second place in 1939 to fourth in 1978. However, the characteristics that have exhibited the greatest change are desire for home and children moving from fifth place in 1967 to eleventh in 1978, and good cook and housekeeper moving from sixth in 1967 to twelfth in 1978.

Greater emphasis was placed on good looks by males in 1978 than in any of the other studies. It jumped from eleventh place to seventh place over the last decade. Beginning in 1939, chastity showed a steady decline in importance. However, in the

Table 1

Rank Order and Mean Value of the
18 Personal Characteristics
for the 1978 Study

Characteristics	Mean Value
1. Mutual Attraction	5.62
2. Dependable Character	5.51
3. Pleasing Disposition	5.33
4. Emotional Stability	5.13
5. Good Health	4.92
6. Education and Intelligence	4.91
7. Good Looks	4.78
8. Refinement and Neatness	4.75
9. Sociability	4.66
10. Ambition and Industriousness	4.65
11. Desire for Home and Children	4.44
12. Good Cook and Housekeeper	4.25
13. Chastity	3.50
14. Similarity in Religion	3.42
15. Similarity in Education	3.32
16. Favorable Social Status	3.26
17. Good Financial Prospect	3.03
18. Similar Political Background	2.19

Table 2

Rank Order of 18 Personal Characteristics in Mate Selection Based on Mean Value

Characteristic	1939	1956	1963	1967	1978
Dependable Character	1	1	1	1	2
Emotional Stability	2	2	2	3	4
Pleasing Disposition	3	4	4	4	3
Mutual Attraction	4	3	3	2	1
Good Health	5	6	9	9	5
Desire for Home and Children	6	5	6	5	11
Refinement and Neatness	7	8	5	7	8
Good Cook and Housekeeper	8	7	8	6	12
Ambition and Industriousness	9	9	11	8	10
Chastity	10	13	14	15	13
Education and Intelligence	11	11	7	10	6
Sociability	12	12	10	12	9
Similar in Religion	13	10	12	14	14
Good Looks	14	15	13	11	7
Similarity in Education	15	14	15	13	15
Favorable Social Status	16	16	16	16	16
Good Financial Prospect	17	17	17	18	17
Similar Political Background	18	18	18	17	18

1978 study it moved back up to thirteenth place, which is the same rank it occupied in 1956.

Education and intelligence has moved up in importance since the 1967 study, while similarity in education has moved down. Males in 1978 placed more importance on sociability than did males in any of the previous studies. The only characteristic which did not change over the past decade are similarity in religion (fourteenth position) and favorable social status which has occupied the sixteenth position in all the studies.

Spearmen rank order correlation coefficients were computed between the 1978 study and each of the other studies. Table 3 shows these results.

Table 3

Rank Order Correlation Coefficients Between the Present and Previous Studies

1978 with 1967:	r = .85
1978 with 1963:	r = .88
1978 with 1956:	r = .81
1978 with 1939:	r = .84

Although it would be inappropriate to append probability values to these coefficients or to their differences, it appears that the 1978 and the 1963 results are the most similar and the 1978 and the 1956 results are the least similar.

Discussion

Interpretation of the data indicates that while there are general similarities between this study and the earlier studies, there are also important differences. The original hypothesis that present day males' value judgments and preferences in mate selection are significantly different from those of previous generations is only partially supported by the results of this study.

When the 18 characteristics were ranked and a comparison made between the findings of all the studies, it became apparent that over the years there has been a high degree of consistency in student evaluation of desired traits in a mate. The present study exhibited more change than any of the earlier studies. The fact that mutual attraction ranked number one in importance for the first time could indicate a more idealistic attitude on the part of today's males.

Two characteristics that exhibited the greatest decline in importance were desire for home and children and good cook and housekeeper, dropping from fifth and sixth place in 1967 to eleventh and twelfth in 1978. This could be an indication of a greater awareness on the part of males, as to the woman's changing role in today's society. Perhaps as a result of the feminist movement, present day males are accepting the fact that women no longer have to accept the role of housewife and mother without question, but instead can have a career of their own if they so desire. Future research in this area is needed to determine to

what extent male attitudes have changed as to traditional male and female role expectations.

The fact that chastity moved up in importance for the first time could be an indication of a move toward conservatism and toward greater emphasis on traditional values in regard to sexual morality. Perhaps the so-called "sexual revolution" of the late sixties and early seventies has run its course and now the penduleum is beginning to swing back in the other direction. Again, only future research will determine if there is a trend to move toward more traditional sexual values and to what extent that movement has already begun.

Some of the most interesting results of this study were found not in the comparison made with the earlier studies, but in comparing the different groups within this study. For example, there was more difference between region than in any of the other classifications. One of the unexpected findings was that the southeast which has always been known as the "Bible Belt" considered similarity in religion as being less important in a prospective mate than did the northeast or the southwest.

Another category where there appeared to be a high degree of difference was that of university classification. However, almost all of the differences occurred at the graduate level with hardly any differences between the undergraduates.

Another interesting finding is that fraternity members appear to be more conservative and traditional as a group than do non-fraternity members. The fraternity members considered a desire for home and children more important than did non-frater-

nity members. They also placed greater importance on chastity and similarity in religion.

A category that exhibited very little difference between groups was that of ethnic background. At least in the area of mate selection, the label of "melting pot" seems to describe America accurately. There are certainly more regional differences within our country than ethnic group differences as indicated by the results of this study.

Many of the relationships between the different groups and variables that have surfaced in the results of this study could constitute an entire research project in and of themselves. If this project has achieved nothing else, it has at least provided valuable data that can serve as a basis for many future investigations in the area of mate selection.

Summary and Conclusions

The basic intent of this study was to replicate and modify a study first conducted in 1939 entitled "Campus Values in Mate Selection." The purpose of this replication was to update and expand the data so that it is more representative of the norms and values of the current generation. This was accomplished by using a nationwide sampling rather than sampling from one university only, as was the case in the original study. The specific hypothesis was that present day males' value judgments, perceptions, and preferences in mate selection are significantly different from those of previous generations.

The subjects for the study were 737 single college males from twenty-nine universities located in various states and different geographical regions of the country. Each subject filled out a questionnaire which instructed him to rate according to importance, 18 personal characteristics considered to be desirable in a prospective mate. Mean rankings were computed for each of the characteristics and rank ordered for the purpose of comparison with the earlier studies. Also, an analysis of variance between each of the 18 traits and each of the independent variables (ethnic background, university classifications, etc.) was computed to further investigate the differences.

Results of the study indicate that while there are general similarities between this study and the earlier studies, there are also important differences. These differences are especially strong within the various groups of the present study.

The results have been discussed and a number of suggestions have been presented as to the possibilities of furture research. Although the results do not fully support the original hypothesis, the expansion of this study in comparison to the earlier studies makes it a significant contribution in the area of mate selection.

"CAMPUS VALUES" QUESTIONNAIRE

THIS IS AN ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

AGE_____ ETHNIC BACKGROUND: CAUCASIAN___ORIENTAL___NEGRO___
AMERICAN INDIAN___SPANISH___
FOREIGN___

UNIVERSITY CLASSIFICATION: FRESHMEN___SOPH___JR___
SR___GRAD-STUDENT___

IS YOUR SCHOOL: STATE FUNDED____PRIVATE INSTITUTION___

FRATERNITY MEMBER? YES ___ PRIOR MILITARY SERVICE? YES ___
NO ___ NO ___

ARE YOU A VIRGIN? YES___
NO ___

HOW DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF POLITICALLY?
NON-POLITICAL___CONSERVATIVE___MODERATE___LIBERAL___RADICAL___

TOTAL NUMBER OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS___YOUR SIBLING POSITION___

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MARRIED? YES___NO___: IF YES, ARE YOU DIVORCED___OR WIDOWED___?

Listed below are traits that are commonly looked for in choosing a mate. Consider them from the standpoint of the kind of marriage partner you would like to have. Please indicate your preferences in the following manner:

First, place a six (6) in front of the four or five items that you consider most important. Second, place a five (5) in front of the four or five items that you consider of next importance to you--above average, but not of most importance. Finally, continue in this same manner until all of the items have been rated--using a four (4) to designate average importance; a three (3) just below average; a two (2) of least importance; and a one (1) of no importance at all. (NOTE: Use a one (1) only if there are items that are totally irrelevent, unimportant, or undesired on your part. DO NOT LEAVE ANY SPACES BLANK).

6 . . . Most important
5 . . . Above average importance
4 . . . Average importance
3 . . . Just below average
2 . . . Least importance
1 . . . No importance at all

____ Favorable Social Status (Rates socially, is prominent, popular, sought-after).

____ Desire for Home and Children (Family-mindedness).

____ Good Health (Not ill, or delicate, or usually tired).

____ Good Financial Prospect.

____ Good Cook and Housekeeper (Understands home management).

____ Ambition, Industriousness (Restless to achieve, to get ahead, not lazy).

____ Refinement and Neatness (Clean, neat, wears clothes well, conventional, refined).

____ Good Looks (Physically attractive, sex appeal, well-proportioned body).

____ Sociability (Meets people well; is able to mix well in most situations; is at home with the social arts such as conversation, dancing, sports).

____ Mutual Attraction, Love (Romantic appeal).

____ Education and Intelligence (Intellectually stimulating, educated, thinks logically and deeply, has interesting ideas).

____ Pleasing Disposition (Cheerful, agreeable, optimistic, sense of humor, good sport).

____ Chastity

____ Similarity in Religion

____ Similarity in Education

____ Similar Political Background

____ Dependable Character (Sincere, honest, reliable, responsible, can be trusted, steady).

____ Emotional Stability (Adaptable, not temperamental, sulky, or otherwise childish).

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